

Destroyer Centennial Symposium Wreath Laying

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Thank you Admiral Walker.

Admiral Mullen..... fellow Flag Officers, active and retired,..... ladies and gentlemen..... and most important of all..... fellow destroyermen, it is an honor and a privilege to represent another destroyerman, our Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Vern Clark, here today.

Today we are honoring and celebrating



destroyers...and the men...and now, women...who for a century have “rode to the sound of the guns” from the North Sea to Ironbottom Sound, the Arabian Gulf to the Caribbean.

Every official asked to speak here at the Navy Memorial does so with a deep sense of appreciation for the sacrifices of those we honor here, comrades in arms no longer with us.

This Memorial is testimonial to the bravery and selfless dedication of those who have gone before us. Those who went down to the sea in ships, sailed to distant waters, and fought to preserve freedom and democracy. Many of these hardy souls found their resting place in the deep. I am ever mindful of their heroic deeds, the ultimate sacrifices paid in the heat of battle on an unforgiving sea.

Now if you follow the destroyermen’s adage never to become fixated on the ship’s wake, you will

see before us in today’s Navy the legacy of these heroes. Today more than 40,000 men and women in Navy Blue are at sea. More than 100 ships, almost one-third of the entire Force, is deployed, operating in three oceans and six seas in support of the ongoing Global War Against Terrorism. Events over the past 14 months have repeatedly shown the dedication of this generation of Sailors and Marines, indeed all our men and women in uniform today, to mission accomplishment. We have the leadership on the waterfront, the combat capabilities in our ships, and most importantly, the spirit in our men and women in today’s Navy, which have made this country great...and will continue to do so in the new century before us.

I am also grateful to those who designed and built our destroyer fleet over the last 100 years. I call them stewards of the Fleet. Just look at what they built - powerful ships with missiles that can reach over a thousand miles inland and radars that monitor the skies for hundreds of miles around. They brought us asymmetric strengths, capabilities that when matched



with the fighting spirit of the American sailor will assure victory for decades to come.

As I was discussing today’s events with my staff, the question occurred to me - what will future gen-

erations say about us from this podium at DD 150? In 2052, the programs that we are diligently working on today, DD (X), LCS, and CG (X) will be at sea with our grandchildren at the helm, manning the combat systems, and in the engine rooms. Some of these ships will have withstood the test of battle, all will do their part on point defending America's interests. We are hard at work building the future of the Fleet, upholding and advancing a century of traditions that destroyermen have given us with their sweat, and too often with their blood.

I do not know who will stand at this podium in fifty years. What I do know is that those of us serving in the Navy today inherit a great legacy and are our generation's stewards of the Fleet. And so it is with this sense of reverence for those who have gone before us, and deep responsibility to those who will come after us,

that we lay down this solemn wreath today. Thank you for joining us.

It was said when they were new to the Fleet, that destroyers and destroyermen were a breed apart...dashing ships and bold men granted John Paul

Jones's wish for a "fast ship to sail in harm's way."

Ladies and gentlemen, let me assure you, on the waterfront today, "we are all destroyer-men!"

Thank you for joining us here. Now, let's go "talk destroyers."

